Skeena Region

MANAGEMENT DIRECTION STATEMENT

November 2003

for Burns Lake Provincial Park

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection
Environmental Stewardship Division

105-07053/

Burns Lake Provincial Park

Approvals Page

Forward

This management direction statement for Burns Lake Provincial Park provides management direction until Environmental Stewardship Division revises the plan or prepares a more detailed management plan. Ongoing consultation between Environmental Stewardship Division and First Nations may require changes to this management direction statement. Aboriginal traditional activities and uses are honoured and respected within the park.

Implementation of strategies identified in the management direction statement will be dependent on available funding and agency priorities.

Approvals

Regional Manager
Skeena Region
Environmental Stewardship Division

Assistant Deputy Minister
Environmental Stewardship Division

Environmental Stewardship Division developed this management direction statement through direction received from the Lakes District Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP)

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Burns Lake Provincial Park
Management Direction Statement

Introduction

Purpose of the Management Direction Statement

Management direction statements (MDS) provide strategic management direction for protected areas that do not have an approved management plan. Management direction statements describe protected area values, management issues and concerns, a management strategy focused on immediate priority objectives and strategies, and, direction from other planning processes. While the MDS identifies strategies, the completion of all these strategies is dependent on funding and funding procedures. All development associated with these strategies is subject to BC Parks and Protected Areas Branch Impact Assessment Policy.

Context

The provincial government established Burns Lake Provincial Park as a Class A park by Order in Council under the authority of the *Park Act* on January 25, 2001. The park is now designated under Schedule C of the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act*.

Burns Lake Provincial Park covers 65 hectares on the south shore of Burns Lake, about four kilometres southeast of the community of Burns Lake with an area population of about 4,000. The small park lies within the asserted traditional territories of the Burns Lake Band, the Wet'suwet'en and the Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council.

The park includes a peninsula jutting into Burns Lake, gently rolling terrain with a young forest canopy of aspen, cottonwood, birch, pine and spruce. Burns Lake shorelines are steep. The Lakes District Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) recommended designation of this park as a possible site for a provincial park campground to serve the regional population and visitors traveling Highway 16. Since 1968, when the provincial government reserved the area for the use, recreation and enjoyment of the public (UREP reserve), local people expressed considerable interest in camping opportunities at the site. The nearest provincial park campgrounds along Highway 16 include Tyhee Lake Provincial Park 145 kilometres to the west near Smithers and Beaumont Provincial Park about 90 kilometres to the east at Fraser Lake. Tweedsmuir Provincial Park, British Columbia's largest wilderness park, provides a variety of superb backcountry wilderness recreation opportunities and lies about 70 kilometres south of Burns Lake Provincial Park, below Ootsa Reservoir.

Dead Man's Island Provincial Park (at one hectare; British Columbia's smallest provincial park) lies about 600 metres to the northwest, within Burns Lake.

Protected Area Attributes

Conservation

- Protects a small area of the Bulkley Basin Ecosection; SBSdk (dry cool sub-boreal spruce subzone). Currently only 3% of the Bulkley Basin Ecosection is included in the protected areas system. Burns Lake Provincial Park is one of 17 protected areas in this ecosection, contributing minimally (less than 1%) to the overall protected area representation of this ecosection.

- Conserves a small area (two hectares) of young cottonwood-dogwood-prickly rose plant community (SBSdk/08) which is a red-listed plant community when mature.
- Contains a small stream with fish habitat and sheltered shoreline riparian areas used by waterfowl and amphibians.
- Used by some blue-listed bird species, including bald eagle (nest and perch trees) and trumpeter swans (shoreline riparian habitat).
- Protects high value moose winter habitat.

Recreation and Tourism

- Provides potential for regionally significant outdoor recreation opportunities including camping, picnicking and nature study following the development of an access road and campground.
- Contains potential for hiking and education in association with cultural and forest ecosystem interpretative trails to be developed in the adjacent Burns Lake Community Forest.
- Provides potential for campground accommodation for travelers using Highway 16 and as a staging point for traveling to Tweedsmuir Provincial Park.

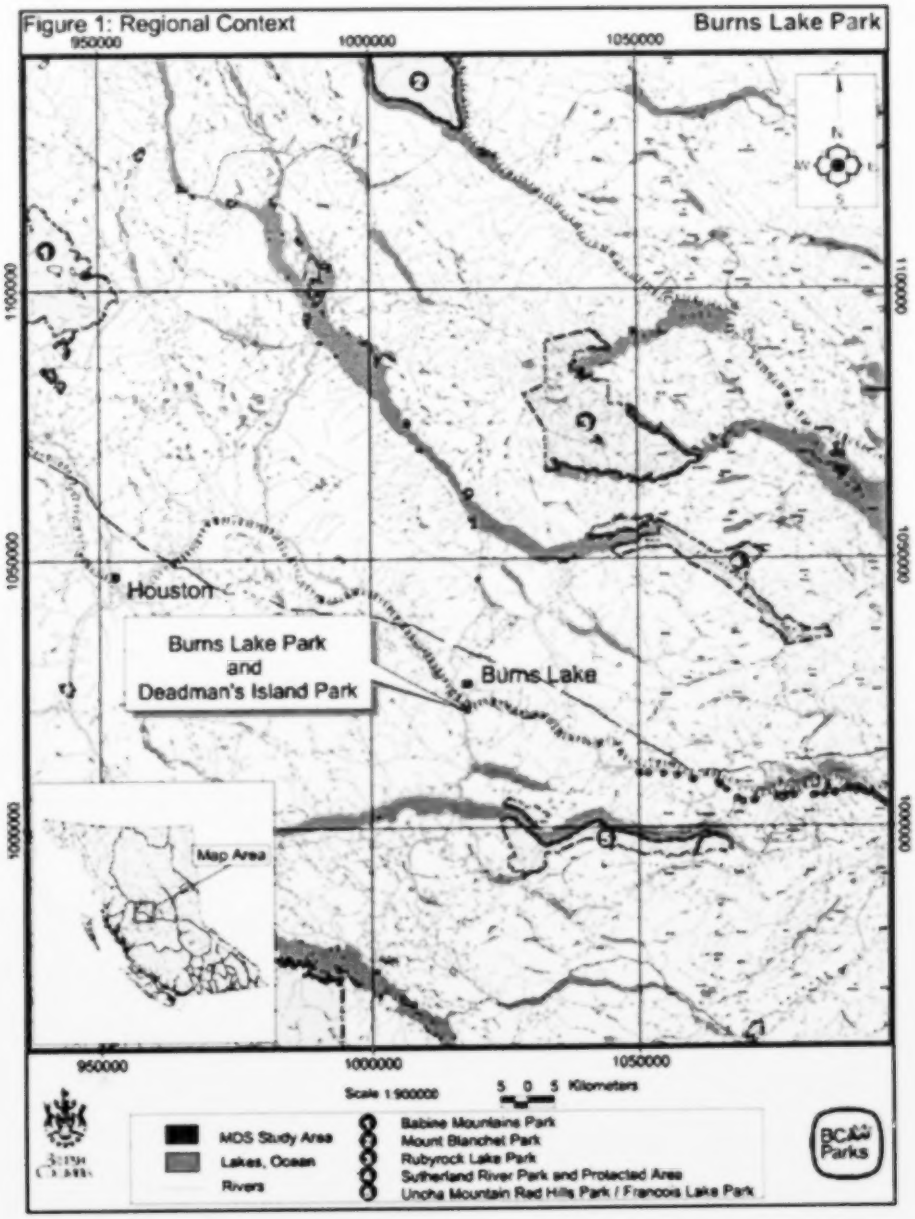
Commercial Business Opportunities

- Provides moderate commercial business opportunities for guided interpretation and education tour groups based on the special features of this park. Likely the best approach for this type of business opportunity is to develop it as part of a systems approach where several provincial parks and protected areas along Highway 16 are included in the tour to give clients a broad and interesting program.

Cultural Heritage

- Protects an important area for members of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation and the Burns Lake Band for wildlife habitat (including deer fawning), hunting and trapping.
- Contains an important archaeological site consisting of two culturally modified trees (bark-stripped pine likely for cambium collection; Archaeological Impact Assessment completed).
- Part of larger landscape with high cultural heritage values, including old settlement sites, trail networks and sacred sites.

Figure 1. Regional Context Map



Significance in the Protected Areas System

- Conserves small remnant ecosystems within the Bulkley Basin Ecosection.
- Protects regionally significant cultural heritage values.
- Provides regionally significant lake and lakeshore outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Provides the potential for campground accommodation for travelers along Highway 16 and visitors to the Burns Lake area, as well as for people planning to visit Tweedsmuir Provincial Park.

Land Uses, Tenures and Interests

Access

Visitors can travel to within two kilometres of the park along a gravel road leading east from Highway 35 about four kilometres south of Burns Lake.

Existing Tenures

- Covered by trapping license 604T034. No park use permit has been issued authorizing this activity in the park.
- Contained within a guide-outfitter territory. No park use permit has been issued for guided hunting within this park.
- Affected by park operations permit SK0210403 issued to the Corporation of the Village of Burns Lake with an expiry date of 2012.

Existing Land Use Activities and Facilities

- Contains no developed outdoor recreation facilities.
- Traditional hunting and trapping area for members of the Burns Lake Band and the Office of the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs

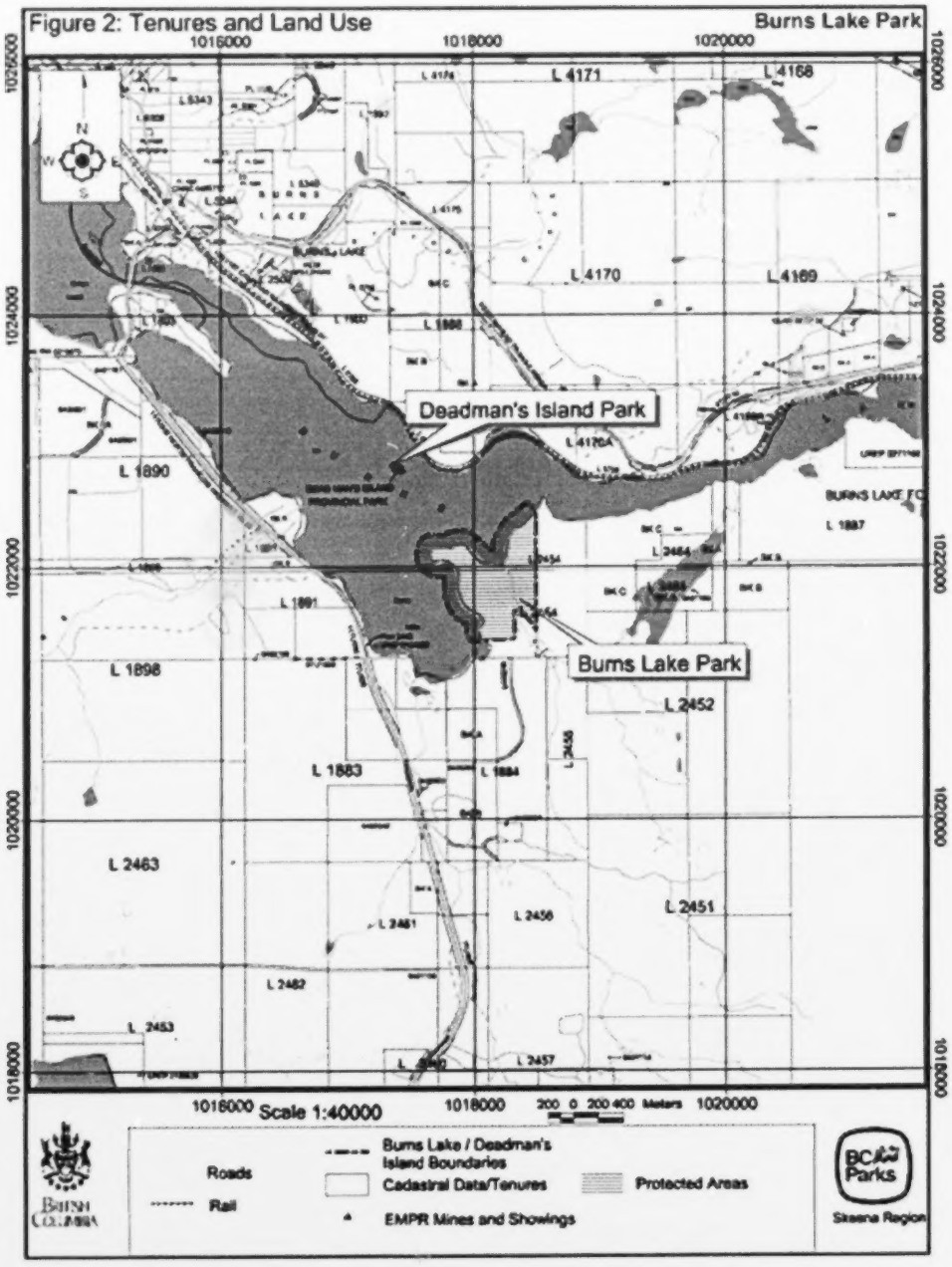
Adjacent Patterns of Land Use

- Situated next to Burns Lake on the park's north and west boundary.
- Lies next to the Burns Lake Community Forest on the park's south and east boundary.
  - A government reserve for the use, recreation and enjoyment of the public (UREP reserve) adjacent to the park's south side is being investigated as a potential site for a cultural interpretative centre;
  - The Burns Lake Community Forest designated 1800 hectares surrounding the park as an Old Growth Management Area. The management area continues for 10 kilometres along the south shore of Burns Lake. Trees will be harvested only to protect values of adjacent areas.
  - The Burns Lake Community Forest, in conjunction with the Burns Lake Band, plans to enhance the recreational values of the area by building trails and providing forest and cultural interpretation.

First Nations Interests

- The Wet'suwet'en, Burns Lake Band and Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council are interested in the park because it lies within their asserted traditional territory.
  - The Wet'suwet'en include the Laksilyu Clan, Ginehklaiyex House, Chief Hagwilnegh, Territory Tselh K'iz Bin.

Figure 2. Tenures and Land Use Map



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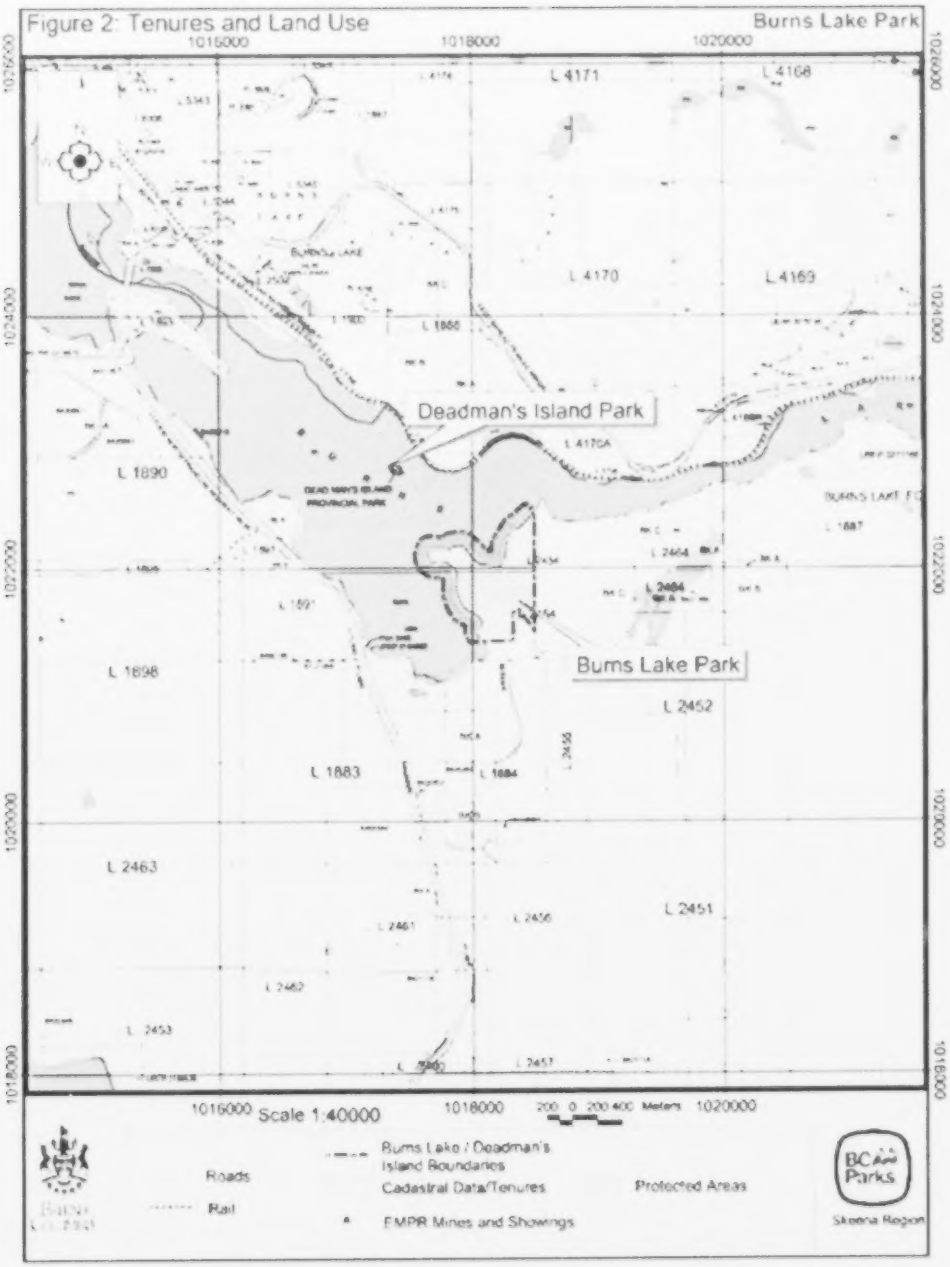


  - The Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council (Burns Lake Band) is associated with the Office of the Wet'suwet'en for representation on land and resources issues and with the Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council for health and social programs.
- First Nations expressed their specific interest in the park is protection of wildlife habitat (bear, moose, deer, eagles, beaver, muskrat, and bobcat) and continuation of hunting and trapping traditional activities and uses outside of the camping season.
- Burns Lake Band is interested in the park as an area protecting deer that fawn in the park in early spring.
- Burns Lake Band is interested in protecting cultural values outside the park (e.g., old settlement site, sacred sites).
- Wet'suwet'en First Nation is interested in the park because of medicinal plants.
- Wet'suwet'en Office expressed an interest in involvement with future park development.
- Burns Lake Band in conjunction with the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs Office is considering several cultural tourism projects associated with the park including an interpretative centre next to the park to celebrate the history and culture of the Lakes District.

Other Agency Interests

- The Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, Fish and Wildlife Science and Allocation Section, has an interest in wildlife and its habitat, principally moose, and fish in the park.
- The Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management (British Columbia Conservation Data Centre (CDC)) has an interest in the species at risk in Burns Lake Provincial Park.
- The Ministry of Forests has an interest in the forest surrounding the park.
- The Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management, Archaeology Branch, has an interest in the archaeological site in the park.
- The Regional District of Bulkley Nechako has an interest in encouraging tourism in the area.

Private and Public Stakeholder Interests

- Burns Lake residents have an interest in the park as a contributor to the area's economic development and as an area where they can enjoy outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Neighbours of the park and its access road have an interest in preventing damage to their properties related to park visitor use.
- The Village of Burns Lake has an interest in the park as a contributor to the area's economic development. The village has a vision including a trail network and various other projects designed to attract tourists. The Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture provided funding to the Village of Burns Lake to develop a "Gateway Community" concept and plan. The municipality, along with the Burns Lake Community Forest has committed to support the maintenance of the park for the next 10 years.
- The Gateway Committee has an interest in encouraging tourism; a trail subcommittee has mapped trails across the entire Lakes District.
- The Burns Lake Community Forest has an interest in the land surrounding the park. The Burns Lake Community Forest has committed funding ($200,000) to build the proposed access road into the park.

- The Omineca Ski Club has an interest in preventing damage to their facilities located near the park from park users if a campground is developed.
- Trapline holder has an interest because of his existing encumbrance on the park for trapping activities.
- Guide-outfitter has an interest in the park because it lies within his guiding territory.

Burns Lake Provincial Park Role Statement

Burns Lake Provincial Park's primary role is to provide outdoor recreation opportunities focused on the development of a fully serviced campground and picnicking facility along Highway 16. The park will also act as a gateway to Tweedsmuir Provincial Park 70 kilometres to the south. The park performs a secondary conservation role by protecting remnant shoreline ecosystems, including a small patch of an immature red-listed plant community, as well as waterbird and mammal wildlife habitat. The park is too small to contribute to representation of the Bulkley Basin Ecosection. Another potential role for the park is an educational function in conjunction with a possible cultural interpretative centre and forest interpretation planned for the Burns Lake Community Forest next to the park.

Management Commitments and Issues

Direction from Previous Planning

The Lakes District LRMP recommended Burns Lake Provincial Park for protection because of its inherent outdoor recreation values and potential for campground development. The LRMP does not provide specific management direction for the Burns Lake Provincial Park, but does provide general direction for all protected areas.

Management Issues

Environmental Stewardship Division identified the following management issues.

Theme	Issue
Protecting the park's ecological values	• The flora and fauna of the park are relatively unknown because inventory of these values is incomplete. • Moose may be at risk because of human winter use of the park. • Deer (especially fawns) may be at risk during birthing season because of human use of the park in the spring. • Nesting eagles and their habitat are at risk to disturbance because of future park campground and facility development. • The park's small stream and shoreline riparian areas may be damaged by silt resulting from campground, road and/or trail development. • The park's shoreline habitats may be at risk because of damage from high levels of human outdoor recreation use. • The trapline owner is in contravention of the *Park Act* if the owner is operating in the park without a valid park use permit. • The park's natural environment may be at risk because of development on lands next to the park. (e.g., First Nations interpretive centre).

Theme	Issue
Protecting the park's outdoor recreation values	• The Community Forest, First Nations and local government are interested in having a campground developed as soon as possible although no funding exists to construct the facility.
Protecting the park's cultural heritage values	• Culturally modified trees outside of the park may be at risk because of park access road development.
First Nations' interests and values.	• First Nations concerned about their opportunity to participate in the management of the Burns Lake Provincial Park. • First Nations concerned that Environmental Stewardship Division will not provide signage recognizing and describing First Nations culture and history in the area. • Cultural heritage sites may be damaged because the new park road likely will increase access to surrounding areas. • Old settlement sites may be damaged because of increased public use of the area outside of the park.
Relationship with local communities	• Relationships among local communities and groups and Environmental Stewardship Division may be difficult due to lack of communication among the parties.
Ensuring public safety	• The public may be at risk during hunting season because of the discharge of firearms.

Management Direction

The vision for Burns Lake Provincial Park is a campground constructed and maintained to Environmental Stewardship Division standards by the Burns Lake Community Forest in conjunction with local First Nations and with the support of local government. The relationship between the local community, First Nations, the Burns Lake Community Forest and stakeholders will be a model and stimulus for future developments. While visitation may take some time to develop, the parties envision one day having high summer use by visitors traveling through and to the Lakes District.

Priority Management Objectives and Strategies

The following table describes management strategies to deal with identified issues. In addition, Appendix 1 contains a table listing acceptable activities, uses and facilities for this park.

Objective	Strategy
To protect the park's ecological values	• Complete an inventory of fauna and flora with priority placed on moose winter habitat and riparian environments. • Implement the BC Parks and Protected Areas Branch Impact Assessment Policy procedures for any proposed development (e.g., campground, roads, trails, etc.) within Burns Lake Provincial Park to prevent or mitigate any damage to the park's natural environment. • Evaluate the significance of the park's fish stream along the park's eastern boundary and natural values that may be at risk. • Evaluate the significance of the park's sheltered shoreline and riparian values and establish guidelines for their protection. • If the campground is developed monitor the effects of visitor use on natural values (e.g., convenience trails, tree damage, etc.) and manage appropriately.

Objective	Strategy
	• Contact the trapline owner to place this consumptive resource use under a valid park use permit if the owner operates in the park. • Support the Burns Lake Community Forest's initiative to manage the adjacent lands as an Old Growth Management Area. • Close the park to human access in winter to avoid disturbing wintering moose and in spring to protect birthing deer and their fawns.
To enhance the park's outdoor recreation values	• Work with local communities and First Nations to enhance the park's outdoor recreation potential. • Collaborate with the Burns Lake Community Forest and the Burns Lake Band to ensure that park trails link properly with trails in the adjacent community forest. • Continue to seek funding for development of 20-unit campground with standard facilities as planned. Provide support to practical alternative funding scenarios that partners may identify.
To protect the park's cultural heritage values	• Cooperate with the Burns Lake Community Forest and First Nations that are responsible for dealing with removal of culturally modified trees outside of the park. • Provide interpretative information in conjunction with the Burns Lake Band and Office of the Wet'suwet'en.
To protect First Nation values	• Meet with the Burns Lake Band and the Office of the Wet'suwet'en representatives to discuss issues. • Discourage human access during the winter from the frozen lake to the park; if future interest in summer access to lake warrants, consult with First Nations before considering development of access to the lake (e.g. boat launch) • Place barriers as necessary to protect identified cultural heritage sites. • Provide an opportunity to conduct periodic inspections with First Nations representatives in the park, if the proposed campground development occurs in future. • Support efforts by the Burns Lake Community Forest and First Nations to prevent spur roads from the proposed park access road.
To provide information to the public about the park	• Work with local communities to develop a promotion strategy for the park. • Ensure information about Burns Lake Provincial Park on the official Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection web site is accurate and current.
To maintain relationships with local communities	• Communicate regularly with representatives of the Village of Burns Lake, the Burns Lake Community Forest, the Burns Lake Band, the Office of the Wet'suwet'en and other groups as required to discuss issues.
To maintain safe conditions in the park for public use.	• Prohibit the discharge of firearms in the park.

Consultation and Future Planning

Because of local community initiatives and the subsequent cooperative nature of the management of Burns Lake, much consultation has already taken place between Environmental

Stewardship Division and the local community. The various partners including Environment Stewardship Division, the Office of the Wet'suwet'en, the Burns Lake Band, the Village of Burns Lake, Burns Lake Community Forest and other community groups will continue to consult with each other as issues require. Environmental Stewardship Division considers the need to develop a management plan with full public consultation low to moderate.

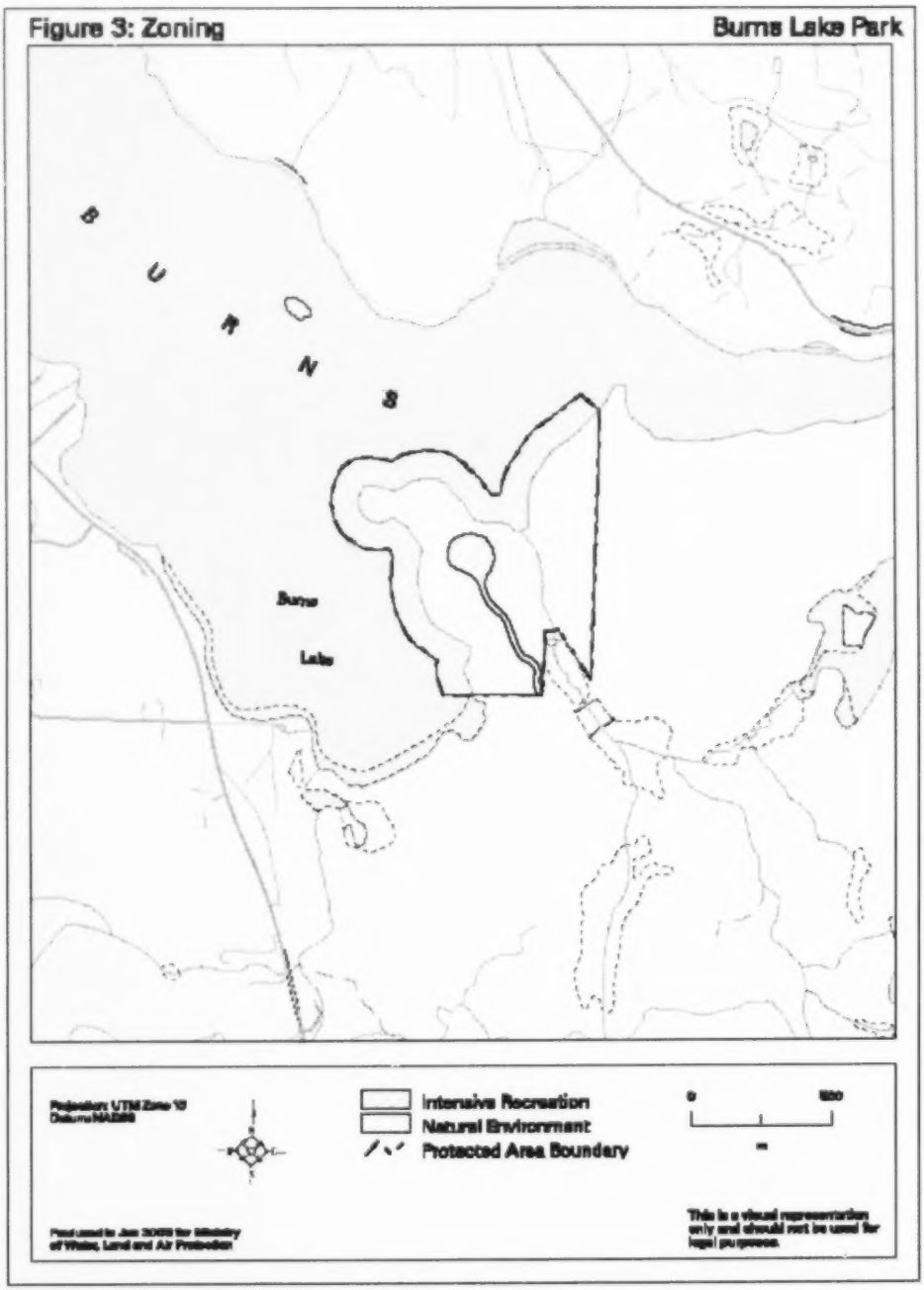
Zoning Plan

Two management planning zones apply to Burns Lake Provincial Park.

Intensive Recreation Zone
Objective: To provide for a variety of readily accessible, facility-oriented outdoor recreation opportunities.
Description: Covers approximately 3 hectares and contains the proposed campground and access road.
Management Guidelines: Oriented toward maintaining a high quality recreation experience. Intensive management of resource and/or control of visitor activities. Operational facilities designed for efficient operation while remaining unobtrusive to the park visitor.

Natural Environment Zone
Objective: To protect scenic values and to provide for backcountry recreation opportunities in a largely undisturbed natural environment.
Description: Contains approximately 62 hectares of the park outside the Intensive Recreation Zone.
Management Guidelines: Oriented to maintaining a natural environment and a high quality recreation experience. Visitor access may be restricted to preserve the recreation experience or to limit impacts. Separation of less compatible recreational activities and transportation modes. Designation of transportation may be necessary to avoid potential conflicts (e.g., horse trails, cycle paths, hiking trails).

Figure 3. Zoning Plan Map



Appendix 1. Burns Lake Provincial Park
Table of Acceptable Activities, Uses and Facilities

Activity/Use/Facility	Acceptability
Aboriginal traditional uses and activities	Y
Hunting	N
Fishing	Y
Trapping	M
Grazing (domestic livestock)	N
Recreational gold panning/rock hounding	N
Utility corridors	N
Communication sites	N
Horse use/pack animals	N
Guide outfitting (hunting)	N
Guide outfitting (fishing)	Y
Guide outfitting (nature tours)	Y
Guide outfitting (river rafting)	N
Cat-assisted skiing	N
Ski hills	N
Commercial recreation (facility-based)	N
Commercial recreation (non-facility-based)	Y
Backcountry huts	M
Water control structures	N
Fish stocking and enhancement	N
Road access	Y
Off-road access (snowmobiling)	N
Off-road access (motorised)	N
Off-road access (mechanical activities)	N
Motorised water access	N Burns Lake Provincial Park (Need further consultation for dock).
Aircraft access – restricted in developed campground area when occupied.	Y
Fire management (suppression)	Y
Fire management (prescribed fire management)	N
Fire management (prevention)	Y
Forest insect/disease control	N1
Noxious weed control	N1
Exotic insect/disease control	N1
Scientific research (specimen collection)	M
Scientific research (manipulative activities)	M

Y = allowed subject to conditions identified in the management direction statement or management plan

M = may be permitted if compatible with protected area objectives

N = not allowed

N1 = allowed for expressed management purposes only

N2 = present and allowed to continue, but not normally allowed